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ABSTRACT

Among the various attempts to identify the social roots of antifeminism, two theories in particular are prominent. The first argues that for both men and women, anti-abortion and anti-Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) sentiments have disproportionate appeal among lower socio-economic status, rural, and older constituencies. The second asserts that for women, these sentiments are most common among those most vulnerable to and dependent upon men. Examination of studies of anti-abortion and anti-ERA opinion suggests that both theories are wrong: what distinguishes opponents of abortion and ERA from proponents is neither social position nor personal dependency but rootedness in religious networks. Degree of religious involvement determines availability to feminist or antifeminist mobilization and shapes cultural beliefs about the conditions that empower women and ensure their security. Both of these, in turn, determine opinion on abortion and ERA. (Author)

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THE SOCIAL BASIS OF ANTIFEMINISM

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"THE SOCIAL BASIS OF ANTIFEMINISM"

ABSTRACT

Among the various attempts to identify the social roots of antifeminism, two theories in particular are prominent. The first argues that for both men and women, anti-abortion and anti-ERA sentiments have disproportionate appeal among lower socioeconomic status, rural, and older constituencies. The second asserts that for women these sentiments are most common among those most vulnerable to and dependent upon men. Examination of studies of anti-abortion and anti-ERA opinion suggest that both theories are wrong: What distinguishes opponents of abortion and ERA from proponents is neither social position nor personal dependency but rootedness in religious networks. Degree of religious involvement determines availability to feminist or antifeminist mobilization and shapes cultural beliefs about the conditions that empower women and ensure their security. Both of these, in turn, determine opinion on abortion and ERA.

INTRODUCTION

Abortion rights and the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) are perhaps the two most important of a set of women's issues that have been the focus of intense political conflict in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Support for both certainly has been at the heart of most feminist agendas, just as opposition to them has been central to the conservative politics of family, morality, and religion. Identifying what distinguishes opponents of ERA and abortion rights--"antifeminists," to give them a simple name--from the supporters of these measures thus may provide a key to certain basic social and political cleavages in American society.

Among the many theories of antifeminism, two in particular stand out. The first, which applies to both women and men, argues that anti-abortion and anti-ERA movements have disproportionate appeal among lower socioeconomic status, rural, and older constituencies that have always been conservative on social or moral issues and have often provided a mass base for right-wing movement. (Lo, 1982: 117) These constituencies are conservative because they are both less educated and more vulnerable to social and cultural change than are others. Like previous kinds of social conservatism (Bell, 1964; Lipset and Raab, 1970), antifeminism can be seen as a response to the status anxiety engendered by social change; or alternatively, it can be seen as part of a new postindustrial pattern of politic n which

liberal upper strata battle conservative lower strata over a range of social issues--from the environment to sex education in schools. (Ladd and Hadley, 1975; Ladd, 1978; Himmelstein and McRae, 1984) In either case, what is crucial is the identification of certain strata and groups as the likely or natural home of antifeminism.

The second theory, which applies solely to women, argues that antifeminist sentiment, perhaps paradoxically, is most prevalent among women who are most vulnerable to and dependent upon men. These women have the most to fear from any measure, like abortion or ERA, that seems to threaten the tenuous security they find in marriage and family. (Ehrenreich, 1983; Burris, 1983) Thus while professional women with relatively large personal incomes, a high degree of economic independence, and a strong sense of personal competence are drawn to the women's movement, housewives with few personal material resources, little economic independence, and a weak sense of personal competence are drawn to antifeminism. Indeed, antifeminists often appeal not to female contentment and gender harmony, but to a sense of vulnerability, oppression, and conflict. (English, 1981; Dworkin, 1983; Mathews and Mathews, 1982) The family appears neither as a tool of gender oppression nor as a site of peace and harmony, but as a fortress protecting women from men.

Both of these theories, I shall argue, are at least partly wrong. What distinguishes supporters of ERA and abortion from opponents in the first instance is neither social position nor personal dependency, but different cultural assumptions about the importance of family and the network of relationships that develop in the private sphere to the happiness and safety of women. (cf. Harding, 1981; Luker, 1984) Both theories are too quick to reduce these cultural differences to differences in social structures and personal experience. In fact, as we shall see, culture has a greater degree of autonomy than either theory suspects. (cf. Wood and Hughes, 1984) The relationship between "social worlds and social values," as Luker (1984: 198) concedes, is a "very complex one."

DATA

In examining who the antifeminists are, we must look both at the general population and at activists. The two may be very different. Among the general population, we are concerned simply about anti-ERA or anti-abortion sentiment--whether individuals express support or opposition to either ERA or abortion. Among activists, we are concerned with activity as well. Activists include those who do anything from writing letters to the editor or circulating petitions to making speeches, lobbying legislatures, or playing a major leadership role. Activists thus do not merely have an opinion; they have been mobilized in some way to act upon it. They may well differ in important ways from those in the general population who share their basic stance on ERA or abortion. Even if they do not, the study of activists

implicitly is concerned not only with the dynamics of opinion formation but also with the dynamics of mobilization.

Studies of opinion on abortion in the general population are based primarily on the various General Social Surveys (GSS) carried out by the National Opinion Research Center from 1972 to 1980 (Ebaugh and Haney, 1978; Granberg, 1978; Granberg and Granberg, 1980; Halebsky and Okraku, n.d.; McIntosh, Alston, and Alston, 1979; Singh and Leahy, 1978; Evers and McGee, 1980; Arney and Trescher, 1976; Peterson and Mauss, 1976; McIntosh and Allston, 1977; Cutler, et al., 1980; Combs and Welch, 1982; Tedrow and Mahoney, 1979; Renzi, 1975; Barnartt and Harris, 1982). Others have drawn upon the National Election Study (NES) data collected by the Institute for Social Research (Cummings, 1976; Himmelstein and McRae, 1984), the Gallup Poll (Mileti and Barnett, 1972), and surveys by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White (Henshaw and Martire, 1982). Two studies of opinion on ERA have drawn on the 1980 NES (Burris, 1983; Himmelstein and McRae, 1984), and smaller surveys have examined opinion in Illinois (Huber, Rexroat, and Spritze, 1978) and North Carolina (Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, 1978).

Data on activists are much more limited: There has been one national and one systematic local study of pro-abortion and anti-abortion activists, and four local studies of pro-ERA and anti-ERA activists. The national abortion study (Granberg, 1981; Granberg and Denney, 1982) consisted of a mail survey of 472 members of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and 421 members of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), both

women and men. The NARAL sample was drawn from a national membership list, while the NRLC sample was drawn only from lists from 31 cooperating states (excluding New York and California). The California study (Luker, 1984) entailed long interviews with a snowball sample of 212 female abortion activists.

Studies of Pro-ERA and Anti-ERA activists have been done in North Carolina (Arrington and Kyle, 1978), Texas (Brady and Tedin, 1976; Tedin, et al., 1977 and 1978), Massachusetts (Mueller and Dimieri, 1982), and Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland--the "Mid-Atlantic." (Deutchman and Prince-Embury, 1982) Of these, only the N.C. study includes a substantial number of men. The studies vary in sample size (from 12 to 310), sampling technique, data-gathering instruments, questions asked, and analytic techniques. They also differ with regard to definition of activist: The Massachusetts and Mid-Atlantic studies limit themselves primarily to leaders, while the North Carolina and Texas studies include a wider range of activists. In addition, several specific anomalies or problems should be noted: The Mid-Atlantic study has a very small sample size (N=12). The North Carolina study has a very low rate of return of mail questionnaires among the Antis (27%). Finally, the Texas study drew its Pro and Anti samples in very different ways: The Pro sample was drawn from members of various women's organizations, the Anti sample from a group of women waiting to lobby against ERA at the Texas legislature. The latter group may well have consisted disproportionately of Church of Christ members (i.e., fundamentalist Christians), as well as being skewed in other

ways. There is no way to take any of these problems systematically into account in the following analysis, but they should be kept in mind.

Most of the variables to be discussed will be self-explanatory, but the notion of "socioeconomic status" should be clarified. The term is used to encompass a number of distinct measures of hierarchical position in society: family income, education (in years of schooling), occupational status (from service to professional-managerial), and class (roughly speaking, whether one is self-employed or works for others). We shall refer to these variables individually and as an aggregate called "SES."

ANTIFEMINISM AND SES

Studies of contemporary opinion on ERA and abortion lend only limited support to the notion that antifeminists are likely to be lower SES, rural, and old. To be sure, specific studies of anti-ERA and anti-abortion activists lend credence to one or more of the just mentioned characteristics, but rarely to all of them or to the same ones consistently. Anti-abortion activists are less educated than their pro-abortion counterparts as are anti-ERA activists in Texas, North Carolina, and the Mid-Atlantic; however, the two groups do not differ in Massachusetts. Texas, North Carolina, and Massachusetts anti-ERA activists are indeed older than their counterparts; but neither the Mid-Atlantic activists nor the anti-abortion ones are. Both anti-ERA and anti-abortion activists tend to have lower family incomes than their opponents, but they are not consistently more

likely to come from rural backgrounds.

More importantly, the differences between the conservative and liberal activists are often very small; they disappear when other variables, especially religious involvement, are controlled; and above all, they are less striking than the similarities between the two groups when compared to the general population. Generally, Anti activists are not that much lower in SES, older, or more rural than their Pro counterparts; these variables do not explain much of the variance in political position. Even where differences are sizable, they are wiped out when religious involvement (measured usually by church attendance) is taken into account, which suggests that these relationships are either spurious or solely through religion. Finally, both Pro and Anti activists are relatively high SES, young, and urban compared to the general population.[1]

From this perspective, the battle between Pro and Anti activists over ERA and abortion appears to be less a struggle between polarized social classes and more one between contending elites with (as we shall see) quite different worldviews. Social position can shape one's political beliefs and activity in two ways: first, by giving one a distinct set of political interests and predispositions; second, by giving one access to the resources and interpersonal networks necessary for political education and mobilization. To the extent that Pro and Anti activists differ substantively in their politics, one would expect them to come from different social positions. To the extent that they share the fact of being activists, one would

expect them to share social traits that promote mobilization, including education and affluence. The second factor is crucial with regard to ERA and abortion activists: Relative to the rest of the population, both are in a good position for political involvement. Why they get politically involved in quite different ways will soon become a bit clearer.

We find a similar picture when we look at the general population. There are few consistent relationships between social position and opinion on ERA or abortion; those we find are often small and wash out in multivariate analysis. For example, one analysis of 1980 NES data found that neither age, education, nor family income had a significant impact on ERA sentiment. (Himmelstein and McRae, 1984) Support for ERA was especially high among professionals, but otherwise occupational status had no effect. Furthermore, this association between Pro-ERA sentiment and high SES was countered by opposite findings for class: There support for ERA was higher among those who worked for others than among the self-employed.

A second multivariate analysis of NES data (Burris, 1983) looked at men and women separately and found that education and urban residence had a net liberalizing effect, but only for women, and that <u>personal</u> income had a net conservative effect, but only for men. It found no net effect for age or class. The strongest influences upon ERA attitudes were race, region, and religious involvement, with Blacks, persons living on the coasts, and infrequent church attenders tending to favor ERA.

The Illinois study, again a multivariate analysis, found that support for ERA among women was related to being Black and having more education but not to age or family income, while among men it was related to being young, but not to race, education, or income. Finally, the North Carolina study of women, looking largely at bivariate relationships, found support for ERA higher among Blacks and professionals, but unrelated to residence, age, income, and education.

The results for abortion are roughly similar: Support for abortion is greatest among high SES, city dwellers, and the young (also among Whites rather than Blacks). These relationships, however, often disappear in multivariate analysis and they are usually very weak. Education has the most consistently found significant effect: The more schooling one has, the more liberal one is on abortion. The relationship, however, seems to have gotten attenuated over time as the less educated have become more likely to support abortion (Arney and Trescher, 1976), and the net effect of education can be weak (Granberg, 1978; Granberg and Granberg, 1980).

Rural residents are usually more likely to oppose abortion than are urban residents, but again the net effect can be weak (Granberg, 1980; Peterson and Mauss, 1976). It is also inconsistent over time (Arney and Trescher, 1976) and across different questions on abortion (Henshaw and Martire, 1982). Occupation, income, and class have consistently nil (or very weak) effects on abortion beliefs, while the impact of age is simply inconsistent: Some studies have found that older persons

are no more likely than younger persons to oppose abortion, especially when education, church attendance, and urban/rural residence are controlled (Granberg and Granberg, 1980; Cutler, et al, 1980; Henshaw and Martire, 1982; Tedrow and Mahoney, 1979). Others have concluded that they are slightly more likely to do so (Singh and Leahy, 1978; Evers and McGee, 1980; Arney and Trescher, 1976; Peterson and Mauss, 1976; Himmelstein and McRae, 1984). At least one study found that once other sociodemographic variables are controlled, approval for abortion increased with age (Barnartt and Harris, 1982).

In short, Americans are not polarized by SES or any other social characteristics on abortion and ERA. In this sense, feminism and antifeminism are not "class" issues. They do not fit a hypothesized "postindustrial pattern" of politics in which the main conflicts are between a liberal upper strata and a conservative lower strata over social issues.

ANTIFEMINISM AND FEMALE DEPENDENCY

Abortion and ERA appear to be of special significance to women. The one offers women more control over their bodies; the other promises to dynamite a mountain of laws that discriminate against women. Yet, women are not significantly more likely than men to support either one. (Himmelstein and McRae, 1984) Indeed, both issues seem to have polarized women and galvanized intense, angry political action both for and against.

The theory that relates antifeminism to female dependency seems to explain this polarization. Those women who are most powerless and most dependent upon men objectively and subjectively are most likely to oppose ERA and abortion. Put another way, those with the fewest resources for competing in the world of work and the most invested in traditional family roles are most likely to take antifeminist positions (cf. Luker, 1984: 192-215). Thus opposition should be correlated with being married, being a full-time housewife, low education, low personal income, and low occupational status and class. All of these reflect the extent to which women have the resources to survive on their own and/or the extent to which they are independent of men. Opposition to ERA and abortion should also be correlated with low levels of personal and political self-confidence and a strong sense of dependency.

Certainly, female ERA and abortion activists are strongly polarized along many of these dimensions. In every study, anti-ERA and anti-abortion activists, compared to their Pro counterparts, are less likely to work outside the home and to have professional careers and high personal incomes if they have outside employment. They are more likely to be married, to have grown up in large families, and to have large families of their own.

In short, Pro and Anti women activists have very different relations to work and family. The former are oriented more to work and the public world; the latter more to family. Yet, we should not be too hasty to characterize the Antis as moved by

feelings of vulnerability and as being essentially dependent, passive creatures. (Consider Mrs. Schlafly.) Anti-ERA activists often have solid records of past political involvement and they score high on measures of political efficacy and personal competence relative to the general population (though somewhat lower than Pro-ERA activists). Differences in relationship to work and family may reflect differences not in vulnerability, but in culture and networks, matters to which we shall return.

In the general population, the effort to root the political polarization of women in different relations to work and family falls apart. Perhaps the most systematic attempt to test this theory has been Burris (1983). Although he concludes that his data confirm the theory, a look at his actual tables shows otherwise: In the multivariate analysis (which includes race, region, church attendance, and a host of other variables), there was no relationship between opposition to ERA among women and either personal income, class, marital status, or housewife status. The only significant relationship was with fewer years of schooling.

The thrust of this study is confirmed by both the Illinois and North Carolina studies. In Illinois, women who favored ERA were not less likely to be married or full-time housewives, though they were more likely to be divorced and to have more years of schooling. In North Carolina, marital and housewife statuses as well as education were but weakly related to opinion on ERA.

So, like theories of class polarization, theories of women's dependence fail to account for differences in attitudes on ERA and abortion. Supporters and opponents of abortion are not polarized in any simple way by social position nor is there any clear connection between the personal situation of women as housewives or breadwinners and their opinions on abortion and ERA.

RELIGION, CULTURE, AND NETWORKS

What clearly, consistently, and strongly distinguishes the Pros from the Antis is religious involvement as measured by church attendance. Opponents of ERA and abortion attend church more often than do their counterparts. The effects are found in virtually every study, and they are consistently quite large--much larger than those of SES, age, residence, or woman's relation to work and family. When religious involvement is controlled, the effects of most other variables are reduced significantly, but controlling for these other variables does not diminish the impact of religious involvement. To the extent that these other variables influence abortion or ERA attitudes at all, it is largely through their impact on religious involvement. If the highly educated or the young are more likely to favor ERA or abortion, it is largely because many years of schooling and youth are associated with low levels of religious involvement.[2]

Religious involvement has an impact even within specific denominations. Support for abortion, for example, declines with religious involvement for Catholics and for liberal, moderate, conservative, and fundamentalist Protestants alike. To be sure,

the differences are more marked for Catholics than for Protestants and for the more conservative Protestants than the less conservative ones, but they are present across the board.3

The impact of religious denomination is less important. Jews and the unaffiliated are distinctly more liberal on both ERA and abortion than either Protestants or Catholics. Protestants tend to be slightly more supportive of abortion and less supportive of ERA than Catholics. Fundamentalist and conservative Protestants are more likely to oppose both than are liberal Protestants.

The influence of religion on attitudes toward ERA and abortion thus cannot be understood purely or primarily in terms of differences in church doctrines. If doctrine were the major factor, one would expect a socialization effect: In liberal churches, the more religious would be more accepting of abortion and ERA than the less religious; in conservative churches, the opposite would happen. This, however is not the case: Religious involvement has a conservative effect no matter what the denomination or its doctrines (though the magnitude of the effect varies).

Clearly, being religious in and of itself is important. The religious differ systematically from the nonreligious, whatever the denomination. It is plausible that persons who find religion personally important and who attend church often tend to interact with and orient themselves toward other religious people. They are likely to become part of a network of religious persons not

only in church but also in the secular world. This network may well sustain a distinct culture with political implications. Religious involvement is thus not an isolated thing: It results from, reinforces, and indicates a whole pattern of interaction. Even if they are otherwise similar with regard to SES, age, residence, or any other social characteristic, the more religious are likely to differ dramatically from the less religious in regard to interpersonal networks and hence culture.

The religiously involved are more likely to oppose ERA and abortion for two reasons. First, their religious involvement immerses them in a culture that contains traditional images of women and the family and encourages anti-ERA and anti-abortion sentiments. Second, they are tied into networks that make them especially available for mobilization by movements that speak to those sentiments.

The mobilization effect is straightforward, so let us deal with it first. As McCarthy (1982) and Mathews and Mathews (1982) have noted, recruitment for anti-ERA and anti-abortion movements takes place in networks very different from those for pro-ERA and pro-abortion movements. The Pro movements are rooted in women's professional and political organizations and networks; that is, they are rooted in the public sphere of politics and work and thus are likely to recruit women who are oriented to that sphere, even if they personally are not working or in politics. The Anti movements, in contrast, recruit through church, community, and neighborhood networks in the private sphere and thus are likely to recruit women rooted in these networks and oriented to the

private sphere. Religiously involved persons are more likely to end up in the Anti movements than in the Pro ones or simply to oppose rather than support ERA and abortion because they are exposed more to the efforts and ideas of the Anti movements than to those of the Pro movements. These efforts are filtered through friends, relatives, and neighbors and thus permeate their whole lives.

The more general point is that the persons most susceptible to mobilization by a social movement are not the atomized and uprooted, as theories of mass society and social disorganization imply, but the socially integrated, as theories of resource mobilization tell us. As McCarthy (1982: 9) put it,

> There has emerged a 'post-mass society theory' consensus around the importance of pre-existing social infrastructures for the mobilization of social movements...[P]re-existing relations among social movements supporters make social movement mobilization far more likely and less costly in human effort and material resources. These networks of interrelationships must, of course, be usable, or, as some say, coopt able. This means, as the latter term implies, that they can be put to purposes other than those for which they were originally intended. Such networks of relations should also be more than casual--the more solidary the relations, generally, the more useful.

Yet, the efforts of anti-abortion and anti-ERA movements would be for naught unless religiously involved women and men were ideologically predisposed to accept the message of these movements. Religious networks are fertile ground for those movements because they reinforce a certain way of looking at the world.

This way of looking at the world, however, does not amount to a fully developed political philosophy that consistently shapes opinion across a wide range of issues in a conservative way or otherwise. The political opinions of the Antis, like those of most Americans, cannot be tied into neat little conservative, liberal, or radical packages. Instead, opposition to abortion and ERA fits with opinions on a narrow range of issues only.

The only indication of a broader political philosophy is among anti-ERA activists, who often have unified conservative political stances and prior experience in right-wing and Republican politics (just as many Pro-ERA activists are consistent liberals with prior experience in liberal and Democratic politics). This, however, is not consistently the case among anti-abortion activists, who were actually more liberal than the general population on civil liberties, capital punishment, and U.S. intervention in foreign countries.

The point is even clearer with regard to the general population. Attitude toward abortion and ERA do not correlate strongly with a whole range of political and economic attitudes. Instead, they seem to fit closely only with beliefs about the family and personal morality, out of which a coherent, if limited, worldview emerges.

Abortion studies have consistently shown that opposition to abortion correlates most strongly with conservatism on a distinct set of personal morality issues. (Granberg, 1978; Granberg and

Granberg, 1980; Halebsky and Okraku, n.d.; Singh and Leahy, 1978; Barnartt and Harris, 1982; Conover and Gray, 1983) Persons who oppose abortion are very likely also to disapprove of premarital, extramarital, and homosexual sex and to oppose looser divorce laws, provision of birth control information to teenagers without parental consent, sex education classes in public schools without parental and community involvement, voluntary sterilization, legalization of marihuana, euthanasia, and suicide. They are also very likely to approve of large family sizes.

As Halebsky and Okraku (1981) have noted, the common theme here is opposition to too much individual autonomy, too much freedom from constraints imposed by traditional roles and norms (especially those of the family), too much emphasis on individual self-determination and self-fulfillment. Many of the freedoms opposed here, moreover, directly threaten the family by loosening the close ties between sexuality, reproduction, marriage, and childrearing. This is a personal conservatism, a concern with constraint, limits, and controls on human drives within the intimate sphere of life.

Underlying anti-abortion opinion, in short, is a concern for protecting the coherence of the private sphere against the corrosive effects of individuation. A related concern emerges from the study of female ERA activists and voters in Massachusetts. Both Pro and Anti activists were asked to rank 13 proposals, ranging from equal pay for equal work to abortion, in terms of whether they would help or harm women. The Pro-ERA

activists consistently rated all 13 items as helpful, but the Anti-ERA activists did not consistently go in the other direction. The Antis regarded abortion, paternity leave, affirmative action quotas, more sexual freedom, government support for day-care centers, keeping one's maiden name, using the appellation "Ms.," and allowing girls on boys' sports teams as harmful; however, they tended to regard equal pay for equal work, more women in elective office, showing more competent women on television, and encouraging girls to enter the professions as helpful. Among the sample of voters, who were asked about only six of the items, those opposed to ERA differed significantly from those supporting ERA on their assessment of paternity leaves, maiden names, and day care, but not of equal pay, electing women, and abortion.

A pattern emerges here that is suggestive of a broader worldview. Generally, anti-ERA women approve of proposals aimed at providing women a greater role in the public sphere (equal pay, electing more women, encouraging women in the professions, showing more competent women on TV), but they oppose those proposals that attack the traditional sexual division of labor or the coherence and autonomy of the family (day care, abortion, paternity leave, more sexual freedom). They also reject proposals that symbolically undermine the traditional image of women (using Ms., keeping one's maiden name, playing on boys' teams). (Clearly, the issue of quotas among activists and abortion among the general population are anomalies here.) In short, anti-ERA women accept a greater role for women in work and

politics, but refuse any correlative changes in women's role in the family. In a way similar to the anti-abortion position, the anti-ERA position fits with a broader concern for the integrity of the personal sphere and woman's traditional role therein.[4]

Analysis of anti-feminist writings (Dworkin, 1983) and intensive interviews with anti-ERA activists (Mathews and Mathews, 1982) convey a sense of female vulnerability that is wrapped up with this personal conservatism. From this perspective, women live in a dangerous, male-dominated world, in which their only protection are the family, the protections they can claim therein, and the relationships with other women that emerge from family and community ties. Anything that seems to challenge these protections directly or indirectly by asserting a non-family-oriented identity for women appears as dangerous and hurtful to women. ERA threatens to do this, because it seems to deny women the special right to be supported by men and to force women into a workworld dominated by men and male values. Abortion threatens to do this because it helps to sever the tie between sexuality and reproduction and thus gives women fewer legitimate claims on men. Both weaken or seem to weaken the special privileges available to women and the private sphere within which these privileges reside.

Central to the worldview of opponents of abortion and ERA are thus <u>cultural</u> images of female dependence and of the importance of a strong private sphere to women. Superficially, as far as women are concerned, we seem to be back to a theory of female dependence, but in fact we are in a very different place.

It is not that self-sufficient, independent women are more likely than women more dependent on men to support ERA or abortion; rather it is that women who share a culture in which women are pictured as potentially self-sufficient, independent, and the equals of men are more likely to support ERA and abortion than are women who share a culture that pictures women as inherently or necessarily dependent or vulnerable. There need not be--indeed there probably is not--any direct correspondence between a woman's personal situation of dependence/independence and the cultural images of woman's general condition she possesses.[5]

This involves a difficult distinction between culture and personal experience and feelings. Two analogies may help, one from Freud and the other from research on anti-semitism. In The Future of an Illusion, having noted that religious beliefs were similar in content and structure to those of the neurotic, Freud hastened to point out that religious persons were not therefore especially neurotic. Religion simply reproduced on the cultural level certain features of the personal experience of neurotics. Similarly, a major study of anti-semitism in the United States (Selznick and Steinberg, 1979) concluded that anti-semites did not necessarily share distinctive personality traits (such as authoritarianism) or even deep-seated animosities toward Jews. What they shared was a culture, common to the less educated in Western societies, in which negative stereotypes of Jews were common and acceptable.

Similarly, women who oppose ERA and abortion need not do so because they personally are especially dependent on men or feel particularly vulnerable to them. Indeed, we have found that among the general population support for ERA is not greater among employed women than housewives, among women with high personal incomes than women with low incomes, or among single women rather than married women. To be sure, anti-ERA activists <u>are</u> more likely than pro-ERA activists to be married, housewives, less educated, and less personally affluent, but this objective dependence on men does not seem to be matched by any especially heightened subjective sense of vulnerability: Anti-ERA activists, after all, often have long records of political activity, and they report fairly high levels of personal competence and political efficacy. They do not appear to be shrinking violets, driven to politics only by <u>personal</u> fear and anxiety.

Women may oppose ERA or abortion quite independently of personal circumstances or feelings because they participate in a culture that pictures women in general as dependent and vulnerable, sanctions the family and traditional gender roles as a haven for women in a male world, and regards ERA and abortion as attacks on that haven. This culture flourishes in networks of religiously involved persons and makes such networks and persons fertile ground for anti-ERA and anti-abortion mobilization and ultimately for the New Right.

In a general way, the finding here fits with the results of research done by Sears, Kinder, and their colleagues. (Sears, Lau, Tyler, and Allen, 1980; Sears, Hensler, and Spear, 1979; Kiewiet, 1983; Sears, Tyler, Citrin, and Kinder, 1978; Kinder and Kiewiet, 1979; Lau, Brown, and Sears, 1978) Examining public opinion on a variety of issues, including the economy, the vietnam War, busing, the energy crisis, and national health insurance they concluded that

> In all these cases, self-interest, defined in terms of a real or potential impact of a policy issue upon the individual's personal life, had only minor effects upon policy attitudes and upon voting behavior connected with them. (Lau, Brown, and Sears, 1978: 479)

That is, persons whose families had experienced unemployment or a worsening financial condition were not more likely to oppose the political party in power or to favor a greater government role in guaranteeing livelihood than those in better economic circumstances. Persons without adequate health insurance were not more likely to favor national health insurance. Persons with close relatives fighting in the Vietnam War were not more likely to give the war importance as an issue or to support the U.S. government's Vietnam policies. Persons who perceived the 1974 energy crisis to affect their lives were not more likely to support either consumption reduction or resource development measures. White persons whose children had been bused or potentially faced busing were not more likely to oppose busing.

Rather than immediate self-interest, Sears, et al., generally found two other factors at work. First, "political attitudes...are formed mainly in congruence with long-standing

values about society and the polity, rather than short-term instrumentalities for satisfaction of one's current needs." (Sears, et al., 1980) That is, measures of self-interest are less strongly related to specific policy beliefs than are measures of broader values. Political party preference, political ideology, and/or racial prejudice do a better job than personal circumstances in predicting beliefs about government-guaranteed livelihood, national health insurance, or busing. Attitudes toward political institutions and political leaders more effectively shaped responses to the energy crisis. Attitudes toward the military, beliefs about communism, and political ideology in general more decisively influenced stance toward the Vietnam War.

Second, at least in some instances, voting behavior reflects one's assessment not of one's own personal condition but of the condition of society as a whole, a kind of collective self-interest. While personal economic circumstances have little influence on voting behavior, beliefs about the state of the economy ("collective economic judgments") had a significant effect: Persons who believe the economy is doing poorly are more likely to vote against candidates of the incumbent political party.

The relevance of this general literature to the specific case of antifeminism should be clear. As on the issues studied by Sears, et al, beliefs about abortion and ERA, especially for women, depend less on self-interest and personal circumstances and more on long-standing values and collective judgments.

CONCLUSION

The crucial factor distinguishing supporters of ERA and abortion from their opponents, both among activists and in the general population, is religious involvement and the interpersonal networks and culture rooted therein. Religious persons are more likely to oppose ERA and abortion because they possess a culture that sanctions traditional family relationships and women's roles and because they are integrated into religious networks that make them relatively accessible to Anti movements.

Education, income, occupational status, class, age, residence, and most other social traits seem less important. They either have no impact whatsoever on ERA and abortion attitudes, or they influence these only to the extent that they determine how religious a person is likely to be. Since these factors have no strong or consistent relationship to attitudes and since no one of them has an overwhelming impact on religious involvement, what seems to be important is the fact of religious involvement not what causes someone to become religiously involved.

For women, their own personal situation and experience also seems not to the point. What matters is less one's specific dependence on men and more one's sense of the generic relationship between women and men. What matters is shared culture, not personal psychology.

NOTES

1. Luker stresses the lower family incomes and fewer years of schooling of her "pro-life" activists compared to pro-choice activists. Nonetheless, they appear to be relatively affluent and educated when compared to the general population. Luker says the average pro-life activist has a family income of $30,000 and at least some college education (1984: 197).

2. Similarly, according to a 1971 NORC Value Survey, the greatest difference in values between those most and those least receptive to sexual equality concerned "religious salvation." Those who supported sexual equality in both word and deed ranked this value 14th of 18, while those who did not support sexual equality ranked it third of 18. (See Ball-Rokeach, 1976.) A study of the National Organization for Women (NOW) and Fascinating Womanhood (FW), a very traditionalist women's organization, likewise found that the married female members of NOW expressed less interest in religion than their counterparts in FW (Arnott, 1978). The NOW women were also more educated, slightly younger, and likely to have fewer children.

3. The data are actually a bit more complicated than this brief summary conveys. McIntosh, Alston, and Alston found that opposition to abortion increased significantly with church attendance among Catholics and liberal, conservative, and fundamentalist Protestants. Opposition also varied directly with church attendance for moderate Protestants, but the differences

were not statistically significant. Ebaugh and Haney, who simply dichotomized Protestant denominations, found a similar relationship for both liberal and conservative Protestants, but it was significant only for the latter. The difference between the studies probably lies in the fact that McIntosh, et al., looked primarily at "social" reasons for abortion (woman is single; woman is married, but couple wants no more children; family is too poor to support another child), while Ebaugh and Haney combined social with physical reasons (danger to mother's health, possibility of genetic defect in baby, pregnancy the result of rape) into one overall scale. This may weaken the relationship between church attendance and abortion beliefs, since almost all Americans, however often or seldom they go to church, approve of abortion for at least some of the physical reasons.

Much less research has been done on ERA, but Burris found that the relationship between opposition to ERA and religious involvement remained significant when degree of religious fundamentalism was controlled, but that the relationship between opposition to ERA and religious fundamentalism did not remain significant when religious involvement was controlled.

4. The fact that anti-ERA women support equal rights in the workplace, but oppose any changes in the traditional sexual division of labor in the family is not at all odd. Drawing on the 1970 National Fertility Study, Mason and Bumpass (1975) found very weak correlations between these clusters of beliefs among

married women under 45. Over the 1964-1974 period, however, these correlations increased somewhat, and support for both equal rights in the workplace and changing traditional family roles increased substantially (Mason, Czajka, and Arber, 1976).

5. Cynthia Pearlman has suggested to me that the crucial factor in shaping a woman's position on ERA is dependency not on men but on a network of relations to other women rooted in family and kinship. Women who are integrated into such a network are likely to conceive of female power and independence in terms of the capacity to call upon resources and support within such networks. Women who are not so integrated are likely to conceive of female power and independence in terms of economic self-sufficiency and hence position in the world of work. The former leads to opposition to ERA; the latter to support.

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